Action around the green table: adapted English verbs in Italian Texas Hold’em blogs and forums
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Abstract

The proliferation of modern-day online gambling – one of the consequences of the spread of Internet technology – has generated international communities of practice. In particular, the variety of poker known as Texas Hold’em has attracted millions of professionals and amateur players due to its potential for big wins and the online opportunity to qualify for the World Series of Poker in Las Vegas and similar tournaments in various countries. The American origins of the game, the need to abide by rules set by the Poker Tournament Directors Association (the only internationally acknowledged body), and the role of English as a lingua franca in the jargon of players have resulted in heavy Anglicization of this form of specialized Italian discourse through direct and indirect lexical borrowing. Following a preliminary study of Texas Hold’em Anglicisms in Italian dictionaries and in the translated version of the Poker TDA regulations (Brusasco 2018), this paper focuses on adapted loan verbs in Italian specialized blogs and forums. While the presence of Texas Hold’em Anglicisms in Italian dictionaries is negligible, the translated TDA regulations show frequent borrowings, a tendency that seems even more marked in blogs and forums. To test the hypothesis of an increasingly Anglicized jargon used by experts in their online exchanges, an ad hoc specialized corpus of such texts written in Italian has been collected. Their highly codified language has been analysed, with particular focus on the integration processes (Heath 1984; Wichmann and Wohlgemuth 2008) affecting a number of verbs denoting the key moves – e.g. bet, fold, raise, call, check – which in their morphologically adapted English-Italian forms might suggest a tension between the participants’ desire to be recognized as knowledgeable authorities and the need to be understood by less competent players. Drawing on Bolander (2013), the paper also reflects the use of Anglicisms as markers of authority and expertise in computer-mediated communication.